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Daniel Guérin
Anarchism and Marxism
1981

From a paper given in New York on 6 Nov. 1973 with an introduction by the author for the first English language edition, 1981. First published 1981 by Cienfuegos Press.

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or as an excuse not to fight under the false pretext that the material bases for a revolution are absent, as the Stalinists made out three times in France in 1936, 1945 and 1968. Besides historical materialism should not be reduced to a simple determinism; the door must stay wide open to individual freewill and the revolutionary spontaneity of the masses.

As the libertarian historian A E Kaminski wrote in his excellent book on Bakunin, a synthesis of anarchism and marxism is not only necessary but inevitable. "History," he adds, "makes her compromises herself."

I should like to add, and this will be my own conclusion, that a libertarian communism, fruit of such a synthesis, would without a doubt express the deepest wishes (even if sometimes not yet wholly conscious) of progressive workers, of what is nowadays called "the labour left" much better than degenerate authoritarian marxism or the dated and fossilized old-style anarchism.

larly anti-anarchist, just as you can still find anarchist groups who remain violently anti-marxist.

In France the Libertarian Communist Organisation (O.C.L.)[1] finds itself positioned on the borders of anarchism and marxism. It has in common with classical anarchism their affiliation with the anti-authoritarian current which dates back to the First International. But it also has in common with the marxists the fact that they both take their stand resolutely on the field of proletarian class struggle and of the fight to overthrow the bourgeois capitalist power, On one hand, the libertarian communists endeavoured to revive all that had been constructive in the anarchist contribution to the past (I must mention in passing, that that was my aim in publishing the preceding book, *Anarchism,* and the anarchist anthology, in four pocket volumes, under the title *Neither God nor Master.*[2] On the other hand, the libertarian communists did not reject those things in the heritage of Marx and Engels which seemed to them still valid and fruitful, and, in particular, relevant to the needs of the present day.

An example is the notion of alienation contained in the young Marx's 1844 Manuscripts, which fits in well with the anarchists' concept of individual liberty. Similarly with the affirmation that the emancipation of the proletariat ought to be the work of the proletariat itself and not that of substitutes, an idea which is found as much in the *Communist manifesto* as in its later commentaries and in the resolutions of the congress of the First International. The same applies to the revelatory theory of capitalism which remains even today one of the keys to understanding the workings of the capitalist machinery. So, too, finally, with the famous method of materialist and historical dialectic which is still one of the threads connecting the understanding of past and present events. One necessary condition however: do not apply this method rigidly, mechanically,

[2] Petite Collection Maspero, 4 vol., 1970.

Introduction

The main part of my contribution to this Cienfuegos Press pamphlet is a paper which I had occasion to give in New York in 1973, on "Anarchism and Marxism". But I would like to preface it with a few hitherto unpublished reflections on *Marx and Engels militant.* For it is this aspect of their activities which attracts me most. I must confess that philosophical marxism, the marxism which criticises bourgeois political economy, indeed even its historical writings (which are, for me, the most exemplary) nowadays leave me rather cold. On the other hand, I like to follow Marx and Engels in action, fitting into the movement of the labouring masses. I will not discuss here all the militant performances of the two revolutionaries, but only two episodes, chosen from among the most revealing; the editorship of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* in Cologne in 1848–1849, and the impetus given to the First International of 1864–1872.

If I've opted for these two major episodes, it's partly because some recent publications have placed them in a new light. The first is the publication of the articles by Marx and Engels from their journal, the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung,* in a French translation in 3 volumes (1963–1971). The second, also in French, is the *Minutes* of the *General Council of the First International* published in 6 volumes by Progress Publications in Moscow, from 1972 to 1975. The study of these episodes fits into the context of a confrontation between anarchism and marxism, for they demonstrate at the same time the incontestable value of the two founders of marxism, and their weak points: authoritarianism, sectarianism, lack of understanding of the libertarian perspective.

It was two young men of 30 and 28 who set up the Rhineland journal in 1848. Their talent as journalists equalled their courage. They ran the risk of all kinds of harrassments and legal actions, both by police and judiciary. They were resolutely internationalist and supported all the revolutionary movements of the many countries seized by the fever of '48. They struggled alongside the workers of their country and Engels was justified in maintaining, much later, in 1884, that "no journal was so successful in rousing the proletarian masses".[1]

Both devoted admirable pages to what they called the Paris workers' *revolution* of 23–25 June 1848, which was to terminate in a heavy defeat, followed by horrifying repression. Marx was not boasting when he asserted the following November: "We alone understood the June revolution." The two friends understood the dramatic divorce effected between the Parisian workers, forced into the most violent of riots, and the mass of small peasantry, malinformed and frightened by this outburst of the "distributionists". They condemned the petit-bourgeois idealists (in power since February '48) for abandoning the insurgents, a desertion they were to pay dearly for, because one year later these pale republicans were to be defeated in their turn by more reactionary than they, and abandoned by the proletariat.

Marx and Engels in addition saw clearly the European repercussions of the workers' defeat in June '48. From that point the revolution was forced to beat a retreat throughout the continent. Among other things it was the bloody days of Paris which drove the armies of the tsar "to Bucharest or to Jessy". The courageous attitude of the two young journalists was to be no less prejudicial to them; their stand in favour of the Paris insurgents put to flight their last shareholders and they had to fill this vacuum by exhausting the family inheritance. The les-

[1] Engels, "Marx und die *Neue Rheinische Zeitung", Sozialdemocrat,* Zurich, 13 March 1884, Werke, Dietz, b.XXI, p. 18.

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And now what of the present?

Without a doubt a renaissance of libertarian socialism is taking place today, I hardly need to remind you of how the renaissance occurred in France in May 1968. It was the most spontaneous, the most unexpected, the least prepared of uprisings. A strong wind of freedom blew across our country, so devastating and at the same time so creative that nothing could remain exactly the same as what had existed before. Life changed, or if you like, we changed life. But a similar renaissance also took place in the general context of a renaissance of the whole of the revolutionary movement, notably among the student population. Due to this, there are hardly any watertight barriers any longer between the libertarian movements and those who claim to be "marxist-leninists". There even is a certain nonsectarian permeability between these different movements. Young comrades in France pass from "authoritarian" marxist groups to libertarian groups and vice versa. Entire groups of maoists split up under the libertarian influence, or are attracted by the libertarian contagion. Even the small trotskyist groups are developing certain of their views and abandoning several of their prejudices under the influence of libertarian writings and theories. People like Jean-Paul Sartre and his friends in their monthly review now expound anarchist views and one of their recent articles was entitled "Adieu to Lenin". Of course there are still some authoritarian marxist groups who are particu-

[1] 33, rue des Vigno les, 7 5020 Paris.

To terminate these considerations on the past history of relations between anarchism and marxism, let us add this:

1. Certain marxologists, such as Maximilian Reubel in France, are to some extent tendentious when they pass off Marx as a "libertarian";

2. Some sectarian and narrowminded anarchists, such as Gaston Leval in France, are to an extent blinded by passion when they hate Marx as if he were the devil.

son that they draw from both 1793 and from June '48 is radical: "There is only one way to abrogate the deadly agony of the old society: *revolutionary terrorism*."

But beneath this extremism appear the already authoritarian traits of early marxism. Engels, recalling the Rhineland journal in 1884, acknowledged that Marx exercised his "dictatorship" on the editorial staff. All his collaborators, recognising his intellectual superiority, submitted to the authority of their chief editor. He abused that power, just as, we will see later, he was to abuse it in the General Council of the First International. Authoritarianism and also excess of pride. Thus, brought before a tribunal in Cologne, he cried, with complete disdain, "As far as I'm concerned, I assure you that I prefer following great world events, analysing the march of history, to wrestling with local idols."

The two friends lost no opportunity to pick on Proudhon and Bakunin. The brave speech given by the former at the 31st July 1848 session of the National Assembly, to the boos of his furious colleagues, aroused the ridicule of the Rhineland journalists. Yet in this speech the anarchist delegate dared to show solidarity with the June insurgents and fling a socialist challenge at the bourgeois order. But for Marx and Engels it was nothing but a clever ruse: to carry off his petit-bourgeois Utopias successfully, the father of anarchism "is forced to hold a democratic attitude in the face of this whole bourgeois Chamber."

For the *Appeal to the Slavs* started by Bakunin, the same sarcasms: For this Russian patriot, the word "liberty" replaces everything. Not a word of reality. All you find in this Appeal are more or less moral categories, *"which prove absolutely nothing"*. Only "Bakunin's imagination" was unaware of geographical and commercial necessities which "are vital questions for Germany". The northern parts of Germany, are they not "completely germanised"? Are these good Germans to be forced to speak dead Slavonic languages? The political centralisation imposed by the German conqueror and which only "the most res-

olute terrorism" can safeguard is the expression of a "pressing need" of an economic character. Too bad if it involves "brutally crushing a few tender little national flowers", exclaims Engels the Jacobin.

Let us move on now to the First International. At the time when he was both holding it poised on the baptismal font and serving as its penholder, (with, I may add, considerable panache") Marx is truly touching in his selflessness and modesty. When the chairmanship of the General Council was offered him, he declined humbly, regarding himself as "unqualified, as he is an intellectual worker, not a manual worker".

On the eve of the Lausanne Congress in 1867, he stated that he was in no fit state to go, and stood down as a delegate. Moreover he was to absent himself from all the annual conferences until the fateful one of 1872. He professed a spontaneist faith. Writing the 4th annual report of the General Council for the Brussels congress of 1868, he proclaimed: "The International Working Men's Association is the daughter neither of a sect nor a theory. It is the spontaneous (in German, *naturwüchsig,* begotten by nature) product of the proletarian movement, which itself springs from the normal and irrepressible tendencies of modern society." This definition of what nowadays we call (incorrectly, anyway) *workers' autonomy* could have come from the pen of a libertarian.

But soon enough Marx took an authoritarian turn, for several reasons: to start with, he had published, in September 1867, the first volume of his *Capital,* which brought him a speedy

[2] Marx was quite attached to his title and function. At the General Council session of 11th May 1868 he snapped at the secretary, his compatriot Eccarius, for having omitted his name at the bottom of an address that the habitual spokesman of the International had composed. He was most indignant: "Mr Eccarius must not be allowed to make use of council members' names as he pleases." Personally, he was quite indifferent, he said, as to whether his name was mentioned. But "the Secretary for Germany is an entity, not a fiction!"

in Germany with the growth of social-democracy and in France with the founding of the Labour party of Jules Guesde.

Later on, the various social-democratic parties united to create the Second International. At its successive congresses, there were lively confrontations with the libertarians who had managed to participate in these conferences. In Zurich, in 1893, the Dutch libertarian socialist Domela Nieuwenhuis picked holes in German social-democracy in terms as much violent as glowing and was greeted with boos. In London in 1896, Marx's own daughter Mrs Aveling and the French socialist leader Jean Jaurès insulted and flung out the few anarchists who had managed to penetrate the precincts of the congress in the capacity of delegates from various workers' councils. True, the anarchist terrorism which raged in France between 1890 and 1895 had contributed not a little to the hysterical repudiation of the anarchists, regarded from then on as "bandits". These timid and legalistic reformists were incapable of understanding the revolutionary motives of the terrorists, their recourse to violence as a form of resounding protest against an abhorrent society.

From 1860 to 1914 German social-democracy and (even more so) the heavy machinery of the German workers' councils spewed anarchism out: even Kautsky, at a time when he declared himself in favour of mass strikes, was suspected by the bureaucrats of being an "anarchist". In France, the opposite took place. Jaures's electoralist and parliamentary reformism disgusted the progressive workers so much that they took part in the founding of a very militant revolutionary syndicalist organisation, the memorable CGT of the years prior to 1914. Its pioneers, Fernand Pelloutier, Emile Pouget and Pierre Monatte, came from the anarchist movement.

The Russian, and, later on, Spanish revolutions were all that was needed to really create a gulf between anarchism and marxism, a gulf which was to be not only ideological but also particularly bloody.

of collective ownership. Did he not remark in his *Notebooks* that "small scale industry is as stupid a thing as small scale culture"? For large modern industry, he is resolutely collectivism What he calls the workers' companies would play, in his eyes, a considerable role, that of managing the big instruments of labour, such as the railways, the large manufacturing, extracting, metallurgic, maritime etc., production.

On the other hand Proudhon, at the end of his life, in *The Political Capacity of the Working Classes,* opted for the total separation of the working class from bourgeois society, that is, for class struggle. Which didn't stop Marx from having the insincerity to call proudhonism petit-bourgeois socialism.

Now we come to the violent and despicable quarrel between Marx and Bakunin in the bosom of the First International. Here again there was to some extent a misunderstanding. Bakunin attributed horrible authoritarian designs to Marx, a thirst to dominate the working class movement, whose traits he probably exaggerated somewhat. But more astounding is that in doing this Bakunun showed himself all the same to be a prophet. He had a very clear vision of a distant future. He foresaw a "red bureaucracy" entering the scene, at the same time feeling a foreboding of the tyranny which one day the leaders of the Third International would exercise

over the world labour movement. Marx counterattacked by slandering Bakunin in the vilest fashion and by getting the La Haye Congress in Sept 1872 to vote to exclude the Bakuninists.

Henceforth the links were broken between anarchism and marxism: a disastrous event for the working class as each of the two movements would have needed the theoretical and practical contribution of the other.

During the 1880's an attempt to create a skeletal anarchist International foundered. There was no lack of good will, but it found itself more or less completely isolated from the labour movement. At the same time marxism was developing rapidly

notoriety and the congratulations of the internationalists, the Germans first: next, under the banner of Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, German social democracy had an animated blossoming and succeeded, in spite of government restrictions, in getting about a hundred unions to affiliate to the International. In the Reichstag in 1869, Bebel boasted of this affiliation. Marx, who was Secretary of the Regional council for Germany,[2] swelled with pride. He was no longer alone. At last he had a great political party to protect him from the rear. Finally, in September 1868, Bakunin founded an *International Social-democratic Alliance* and aimed to enter it en bloc into the AIT. Panic-stricken, Marx got the Regional Council to refuse this admission. But in March 1869, a shaky compromise intervened: only the national sections of Bakunin's libertarian organisation were accepted into the International. With a bad grace, Marx had picked over the programme and statutes of the Alliance, in the margin of which he had scrawled a reference to Bakunin as *asinus asinorum"* (the ass of asses). The quarrel was to be revived in 1871–1872. Weary of this internal struggle, so wounding to his pride, Marx called on Engels for help, had him admitted as a member of the General Council and entrusted him with the job of undermining Bakunin and his partisans in all the countries concerned. Landed thus in the saddle, Engels proved himself more aggressive and more sectarian even than Marx himself. He showed a distinct liking for dirty work. In this way the two revolutionaries put their partisan interests before those of the workers who joined the International in ever-increasing numbers and endowed it with a heightened brilliance. Even the bloody crushing of the Paris Commune, far from damaging the AIT, gave it an extra lustre: survivors of the massacre, escaped to London, made dramatic entrances into the General Council.

Marx and Engels made use of this growth of prestige and power of an organisation which they then led, to plot the expulsion of the anarchists, those spoilsports, those declared enemies of the State, those opponents of electoral compromises of

the kind practised by the German social-democrats. The eviction was contrived in two stages, firstly, at a meeting (non-statutory) in London in September 1871, then at the Congress (rigged) held at La Haye in 1872. Three spokesmen for libertarian socialism, Michael Bakunin, James Guillaume, Adhemar Schwitzguebel were excluded by an artificial majority. Marx and Engels managed to get the General Council relegated to New York, to the tender mercies of their friend Sorge. The International, at least in its first form, was dead.

Daniel Guérin

8

Let us recall now how anarchists and marxists, since their political birth, have come into conflict with one another.

The first skirmish was started by Marx-Engels against Max Stirner in their second-rate book: *German Ideology*.[1] It rests on a reciprocal misunderstanding. Stirner does not underline clearly enough that beyond his exaltation of the Ego, of the individual considered as a "Unique", he advocates the voluntary association of that "Unique" with others, that is to say a new type of society founded on federative free choice and the right of secession—an idea to be taken up later by Bakunin and finally by Lenin himself when discussing the national question. On their side, Marx and Engels misinterpreted Stirner's diatribes against communism, which they thought to be of reactionary inspiration, whereas in reality Stirner was inveighing against a very particular variety of communism, the "crude" State communism of the Utopian communists of his time, such as Weitling in Germany and Cabet in France, for Stirner estimated, rightly, that that kind of communism endangered individual liberty.

Next, as already mentioned, occurred Marx's furious assault on Proudhon, in part for the same reasons, which were these: Proudhon extolled limited personal property in as far as he saw in it a measure of personal independence. What Marx failed to grasp was that for major industry, in other words for the capitalist sector, Proudhon came down fair and square on the side

[1] In fact this vituperative attack remained in manuscript form and w as not published until 1932 (in French 1937–1947), bringing into conflict with Stirner a number of marxists of this century, such as Pierre Naville.

But it must be pointed out that Marx never examined in detail the ways in which workers' control could function, whereas Proudhon devoted pages and pages to it. The latter, who began life as a worker, knew what he was talking about; he had observed attentively the "workers' associations" born during the course of the 1848 revolution. The reasons for Marx's attitude is probably that it was inspired by disdain and that he considered the question to be "utopian". Today, anarchists have been the first to put workers" control back on the agenda,[1] whence it has become so trendy that it has since been confiscated, rehabilitated, altered, by anyone and everyone.

[1] The essential framework of the preceding book, published in 1965, is workers' control, the dynamics of which were accentuated by the May '68 revolution.

1

When one wishes to discuss this sort of subject, one is confronted by several difficulties. Let us begin with the first one. What do we really mean by the word "marxism"? And which marxism are we talking about?

I feel it's important to explain immediately: what we mean here by "marxism" is all of the material written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels themselves. And not that of their more or less faithless successors, who have usurped the label of "marxists".

Such, in the first instance, is the case of the distorted (one could even say betrayed) marxism of the German social-democrats.

Here are a few examples:

During the first years of the social-democratic party in Germany, in Marx's lifetime, the social-democrats launched the slogan of a so-called Volkstaat (People's State). Marx and Engels were probably so happy and proud to have at last, in Germany, a party of the masses drawing inspiration from them, that they displayed a strange indulgence towards it. It took Bakunin's furious and persistent denunciation of the Volkstaat and at the same time of the social-democrats' collusion with the bourgeois radical parties for Marx and Engels to feel obliged to repudiate such a slogan and such a practice.

Much later, in 1895, the ageing Engels while writing his famous preface to Marx's *Class Struggle in France,* was to make a complete revision of marxism in a reformist direction, which is to say putting the accent on the use of the ballot paper as the ideal way, if not the only way, to take power. Engels, therefore,

was no longer marxist in the sense that I understand it. Next, Karl Kautsky became the equivocal successor to Marx and Engels. On one hand, in theory, he made a show of keeping within the bounds of revolutionary class struggle, while in fact covering up the successively more opportunist and reformist practices of his party. At the same time, Edward Bernstein, who also saw himself as a "marxist", called for more frankness from Kautsky and openly renounced class struggle, which according to him was out of date, in favour of electoralism, parliamentarianism and social reforms.

Kautsky, on the other hand, considered it "entirely wrong" to say that the socialist conscience was the necessary and direct result of proletarian class struggle. If he was to be believed, socialism and class struggle did not generate one another. They arose from different premisses. The socialist conscience came from science. The carriers of science would not be the proletariat, but the bourgeois intellectuals. By them would scientific socialism be "communicated" to the proletarians. To conclude: "The socialist conscience is an element imported from outside the proletarian class struggle, and not something which springs from it spontaneously."

The able theoretician in German social-democracy who remained faithful to the original marxism was Rosa Luxemburg. Nevertheless, she had to make plenty of tactical compromises with the leadership of her party; she did not openly criticise Bebel and Kautsky; she did not enter into

open conflict with Kautsky until 1910, when her ex-tutor dropped the idea of the mass political strike, and above all she tried hard to dissimulate the strong links with anarchism of her conception of the revolutionary spontaneity of the masses; she resorted to pretence of vituperations against the anarchists.[1] Thus she hoped not to alarm a party which she was attached

[1] Cf. my book: *Rosa Luxemburg and Revolutionary Spontaneity,* Flammarion, '"Questions of History" series, 1971.

to use to their advantage the means and artifices of bourgeois democracy. Not only do they willingly make use of the vote, which they regard as one of the best ways of taking power, but it happens that they delight in concluding sordid electoral pacts with bourgeois liberal or radical parties, when they think they won't succeed in winning parliamentary seats without such alliances. Certainly anarchists do not have, as people are too ready to imagine, a metaphysical horror of the ballot box. Proudhon was once elected to the 1848 National Assembly; another time he supported the candidature of Raspail, a progressive doctor, for the presidency of the Republic. However, later on, under the Second Empire, he dissuaded the workers from presenting candidates at the elections. But for him it was a simple question of opportunity: he disapproved of any oath of allegiance to the imperial regime. On one occasion, the Spanish anarchists avoided taking a rigid position against participation in the *Frente Popular* elections in February 1936. But apart from these rare exceptions, the anarchists recommend quite different ways to vanquish the capitalist adversary: direct action, union action, workers' autonomy, general strike.

Now we come to the dilemma: nationalisation of the means of production or workers' control? Here again Marx and Engels evade the issue. In the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, which was directly inspired by the French State socialist Louis Blanc, they announced their intention of "centralising all the means of production into the hands of the State". But by the word State they meant the "proletariat organised into a leading class". Then why on earth call that kind of proletarian organisation a *State!* And why, too, do they repent much later on and add, in June 1872, a preface to a re-edition of the *Manifesto* in which they revise their summary statism of 1848, referring to the 1871 Address on the Commune where the phrase is henceforward "self government of the producers"? Doubtless they felt the need to make this concession to the anarchist wing of the International.

vantage over the rest of the proletarian mass of understanding clearly the conditions, the progress and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement."

This trenchant affirmation could well mean that, because of such an "advantage", the communists reckon to have a historic right to appropriate the leadership of the. proletariat. If this is so, the anarchists would no longer approve. They disagree that there can be an avant-garde *outside* of the proletariat itself and they believe that they should limit themselves to playing the role, at the side or in the bosom of the proletariat, of disinterested advisors, of "catalysts", so as to aid the workers in their own efforts with a view to reaching a more elevated degree of consciousness.

Thus we are brought to the question of the revolutionary spontaneity of the masses, a specifically libertarian notion. In fact we very often find the words "spontaneous" and "spontaneity" flowing from the pen of Proudhon and Bakunin. But never, which is rather strange, in the writings of Marx and Engels, at least not in their original pieces in German. In translations, the words in question appear from time to time, but they are inexact approximations. In reality, Marx and Engels refer only to the auto-activity (Selbsttätigkeit) of the masses, a more restrained notion than spontaneity. For a revolutionary party may, parellel to its more important activities, gingerly admit to a certain dose of mass "auto-activity", but spontaneity is another matter and risks compromising the party's pretensions to the leading role. Rosa Luxemburg was the first marxist to use, in German, the word *spontan* (spontaneous) in her writings, after having borrowed it from the anarchists, and to accent the predominant role of spontaneity in the mass movement. One could imagine that the marxists harbour a secret distrust of a sociological phenomenon which does not leave sufficient room for the intervention of their supposed leaders.

Then the anarchists are none too comfortable when they observe, from time to time, that the marxists are quite willing

to both by conviction and, it must be said, for it is now known, by material interests.[2]

But, in spite of variants in presentation, there is no real difference between the anarcho-syndicalist general strike and what the prudent Rosa Luxemburg preferred to name "mass strike". In the same way, her violent disagreements, the first with Lenin in 1904, the last in the spring of 1918, with the bolshevik power, were not very far from anarchism. The same for her ultimate ideas, in the Spartacist movement, at the end of 1918, of a socialism powered from the bottom up by workers' councils. Rosa Luxemburg is one of the links between anarchism and authentic marxism.

But authentic marxism was not distrusted only by German social-democracy. It was altered in a great measure by Lenin. He considerably increased certain of the jacobin and authoritarian traits which already appear from time to time, although not always, in the writings of Marx and Engels.[3] He introduced an ultracentralism, a narrow sectarian concept of the Party (with a capital P) and above all the idea of professional revolutionaries as leaders of the masses.[4] Not many of these notions can be found in Marx's writings, where they are no more than embryonic and underlying.

Nevertheless, Lenin violently accused the social-democrats of having reviled the anarchists, and, in his little book *The State and the Revolution,* he devoted a whole section to paying them tribute for their fidelity to the Revolution.

[2] Cf. Rosa Luxemburg, Letters to *Léon Jogichès,* 2, Vol., Denoël-Gonthier, 1971.

[3] Cf. in my book *For Libertarian Marxism,* Robert Laffont, 1969, the essay *"The Dejacobinised Revolution".*

[4] Ibid., the essay "Lenin or socialism from the top".

2

The approach to our subject presents a second difficulty. Marx and Engels' way of thinking is difficult enough to comprehend, for it evolved quite a bit in the course of a half-century of labour to reflect the living reality of their times. Despite all the attempts of certain of their modern commentators, (which included a Catholic priest) there is no marxist dogmatism.

Let us take a few examples.

The young Marx, a disciple of the philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach and a humanist, is very different from the Marx of riper years who, having broken with Feuerbach, retreats into a pretty rigid scientific determinism.

The Marx of the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung,* whose sole desire is to be regarded as a democrat, and who sought an alliance with the progressive German bourgeoisie, bears little resemblance to the Marx of 1850, communist and even blanquiste, the eulogist of permanent revolution, of independent communist political action and the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The Marx of the following years, postponing till much later the international revolution and shutting himself away in the British Museum library, there to give himself up to extensive and peaceful scientific research, is again completely different to the insurrectionalist Marx of 1850, who believed in an imminent general uprising.

The Marx of 1864–1869, playing the role at first of disinterested and discreet counsellor (behind the scenes) of the assembled workers in the First International, suddenly becomes, from 1870 onwards, an ultra-authoritarian Marx who rules from London over the General Council of the International.

7

Now let us recap on the principal points of divergence between anarchism and marxism:

First of all, although they agree on the ultimate abolition of the State, the marxists believe it necessary, after a victorious proletarian revolution, to create a new State, which they call a "workers' state", for an indefinite period: after which they promise that such a State, sometimes labelled "semi-state", would finally wither away. On the contrary, the anarchists object that the new State would be much more omnipotent and oppressive than the bourgeois State, due to the statist property of the whole economy, and that its ever growing bureaucracy would refuse to "wither away".

Then, the anarchists are a little suspicious as regards the missions assigned by the marxists to the communist minority of the population. If they were to consult the Holy Scriptures of Marx and Engels, they would have only too good a reason to harbour doubts on the subject. Certainly, in the *Communist Manifesto,* you can read that "the communists do not have separate interests from the rest of the proletariat" and that "they consistently represent the interest of the whole movement". Their "theoretical concepts", swear the authors of the *Manifesto,* "are not in the least based on the ideas or principles invented or discovered by some world reformer or other. They are only the general expression of the effective conditions of an existing class struggle, of a historic movement operating before our eyes". Yes, sure, and here the anarchists are in agreement. But the sentence I shall now quote is somewhat ambiguous and alarming: "Theoretically they (the communists) have the ad-

wrote once that the Enrages, the supporters of the left wing ex-priest Jacques Roux, spokesman of the working class population of the suburbs, had been the "principal representatives of the revolutionary movement". But, conversely, Engels claimed elsewhere that someone "could at the very least have lent a hand from above" to the proletariat of 1793.

Lenin, later on, showed himself to be much more of a jacobin than his teachers, Marx and Engels. According to him, jacobinism would have been "one of the culminating points tht the oppressed class reaches in the struggle for its emancipation". And he liked to call himself a jacobin, adding always: "A jacobin linked with the working class."

Our conclusion on this point is that the anarchists could not have got on with the marxists if the seconds-in-command had not purged themselves for good of any jacobin influences.

The Marx who, at the start of 1871, gave severe warnings against a Parisian insurrection, is not the same as the one who, only shortly after, in the famous Address, published under the title of *Civil War in France,* praises the Paris Commune to the skies (certain aspects of which, be it said in passing, he idealises).[1]

Finally the Marx whom in the same work, asserts that the Commune had the merit to destroy the machinery of the State and replace it with communal power is not the same one who, in the *Letter on the Gotha Programme,* endeavoured to convince the reader that the State must survive, for quite a long period after the proletarian revolution.[2]

Thus, then, there is no question of considering the original Marxism, that of Marx and Engels, as a homogeneous bloc. We must submit it to a close critical examination and only retain the elements which have a family tie with anarchism.

[1] Cf. in my book *The French Revolution and Us,* Maspero, 1976, the essay "Beware of the new Versailles!"

[2] It is true that the piece on the Commune was really an Address to the First International: Marx, holding the pen, had to take into account the various currents of that working class organisation where statist authoritarians rubbed shoulders with libertarians and were obliged to make them concessions, disclaimed later on.

3

We are now confronted with a third difficulty. For even less than marxism does anarchism form a homogeneous body of doctrine. As I have shown in the preceding book, the refusal of authority, the emphasis placed on the priority of individual judgement, particularly incites libertarians, as Proudhon said in a letter to Marx, to "profess anti-dogmatism". Thus the views of libertarians are more diverse, more fluid, more difficult to apprehend than those of the socialists who are regarded as authoritarians. Different currents exist at the heart of anarchism: apart from the libertarian communists that I have links with you can count individualist anarchists, collective anarchists, anarchosyndicalists and numerous other varieties of anarchism: nonviolent anarchists, pacifist anarchists, vegetarian anarchists etc.

The problem, then, presents itself of knowing which variety of anarchism we are going to set up against the original marxism, so as to discover which are the points where the two principal schools of revolutionary thought might agree—or not agree.

It is apparent to me that the variety of anarchism least distanced from marxism is the constructive, gregarious anarchism, the collective or communist anarchism. And it is not at all by chance that it is that very one, and it alone, which I have attempted to delineate in the preceding little book.

through the Society of Jacobins. Put more plainly, at its meetings those of its members who extolled one or other of the two revolutions came into conflict.

However, in the later political literature, the word *jacobin* was commonly used to describe a revolutionary bourgeois tradition, directing the country and the revolution from high by authoritarian means, and the word was used in this sense as much by the anarchists as by the marxists. For example, Charles Delescluze, the leader of the majority right wing of the Paris Commune Council, regarded himself as a *jacobin,* a robespierrist.

Proudhon and Bakunin, in their writings, denounced the "jacobin spirit", rightly considered by them as a political legacy of the bourgeois revolutionaries. On the other hand, Marx and Engels had some trouble in freeing themselves from this jacobin myth, made glorious by the "heroes" of the bourgeois Revolution, among them Danton (who in actual fact was a corrupt politician and a double agent) and Robespierre (who ended up an apprentice dictator). The libertarians, thanks to the keenness of their anti-authoritarian vision, were not duped by jacobinism. They understood quite clearly that the French Revolution was not only a civil war between absolute monarchy and the bourgeois revolutionaries, but also, a bit later, a civil war between "jacobinism" and what I will call, for convenience's sake, *communalism.* A civil war whose outcome, in March 1794, was the defeat of the Paris Commune and the beheading of its two municipal magistrates, Chaumette and Hebert, that is to say the overthrow of the people's power, just as the October revolution in Russia ended in the liquidation of the factory councils.

Marx and Engels swung perpetually between jacobinism and communalism. Right at the beginning they praised the "example of rigorous centralisation in France in 1793". But much later, much too late, in 1885, Engels realised that they had been misled and that the said centralisation had laid the way open to the dictatorship of Napoleon the First. It happened that Marx

6

I mentioned a moment ago that the first spokespeople of the French workers' movement were inspired to an extent by the great French Revolution. Let us come back to this point in a little more detail.

At the heart of the French Revolution there were in fact two very different sorts of revolution, or if you prefer, two contradictory varieties of powers, one formed by the left wing of the bourgeoisie, the other by a preproletariat (small artisans and waged workers).

The first was authoritarian, nay dictatorial, centralised, oppressive to the unprivileged. The second was democratic, federalist, composed of what today we would call workers' councils, that is to say the 48 districts of the city of Paris associated within the framework of the Paris Commune and the people's societies in the provincial cities.[1] I am not afraid to say that this second power was essentially *libertarian,* as it were the precursor of the 1871 Paris Commune and the Russian Soviets of 1917, whereas the first kind was christened, (although only after the event, in the course of the 19th century) *jacobin.* What's more, the word is incorrect, ambiguous and artificial. It was taken from the name of a popular Paris club, The Society of Jacobins, which itself came from the abbey of a monastic order in whose building the club was set up. In fact, the demarcatory line of the class struggle between bourgeois revolutionaries on one side and unprivileged on the other passed inside and right

[1] Cf. my book *Class Struggle under the First Republic,* reprint, 2 vol., Gallimard, 1968, and the digest *Bourgeois and shirtsleeves,* Gallimard, 1973; finally *The French Revolution and Us,* cited above.

4

If one looks a little closer, it is not hard to discover that in the past anarchism and marxism mutually influenced each other.

Errico Malatesta, the great Italian anarchist, wrote somewhere: "Almost all the anarchist literature of the 19th century was impregnated with marxism."

We know that Bakunin bowed respectfully before Marx's scientific abilities, to the extent of having started to translate into Russian the first volume of *Capital.* For his part, the Italian anarchist, his friend Carlo Cafiero, published a summary of the same work.

Going the other way, Proudhon's first book, *What is Property?* (1840) and particularly his great book: *System of Economic Contradictions or Philosophy of Poverty* (1846), deeply influenced the young Marx, even though shortly afterwards the ungrateful economist was to mock his teacher and write against him the venomous *Poverty of Philosophy.*

In spite of their quarrels, Marx owed a lot to the views expressed by Bakunin. So as not to repeat ourselves, two of them will suffice to remind us:

The Address Marx composed on the Paris Commune is, for the reasons given later on, largely of Bakunian inspiration, as Arthur Lehnig, the editor of the *Bakunin Archives,* has pointed out: It was thanks to Bakunin that Marx, as has already been said, saw himself obliged to condemn the slogan of his social-democrat associates' *Volkstaat.*

5

Marxism and anarchism are not merely influenced by one another. They have a common origin. They belong to the same family. As materialists we do not believe that ideas are born purely and simply in the brains of human beings. They merely reflect the experience gained by the mass movements through class struggle. The first socialist writers, as much anarchists as marxists, together drew their inspiration first of all from the great French Revolution of the end of the 18th century, then from the efforts undertaken by the French workers, starting in 1840, to organise themselves and struggle against capitalist exploitation.

Very few people know that there was a general strike in Paris in 1840. And during the following years there was a flourishing of workers' newspapers, such as *L 'Atelier.* Now it was the same year—1840—the coincidence is remarkable—that Proudhon published his *Memoire against Property* and, four years later, in 1844, the young Marx recorded in his celebrated and for a long time unedited *Manuscripts,* the tale of his visit to the Paris workers and the vivid impression that these manual labourers had made on him. The year before, in 1843, an exceptional woman, Flora Tristan, had preached the *Workers' Union* to the labourers and undertaken a Tour de France to make contact with the workers in the cities.

Thus anarchism and marxism, at the start, drank at the same proletarian spring. And under the pressure of the new working class they assigned to themselves the same final aim, i.e. to overthrow the capitalist state, and to entrust society's wealth, the means of production to the workers themselves. Such was

subsequently the basis of the collectivist agreement concluded between marxists and bakuninists at the 1869 congress of the First International, before the Franco-Prussian war of 1870. Moreover it is worth noting that this agreement was directed against the last disciples, turned reactionaries, of Proudhon (who died in 1865). One of these was Tolain, who clung to the concept of private ownership of the means of production.